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MEMORIAL BOOKLET

OF THE

FREE CHURCH FIRE

OF

JANUARY 27, 1941

Published under the auspices of
the Free Church Durham Club
May 1, 1941

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FOREWORD

This booklet, in which are presented certain records and articles pertaining to the Free Church fire, has been published under the auspices of the Free Church Durham Club. The Durham Club is composed of young men and women who have attended or who hope to attend the summer session of the Northern New England School of Religious Education at Durham, New Hampshire.

It is believed that all members, and many friends of the Free Church will desire a copy of this booklet for permanent reference. In addition to the intrinsic value of the booklet itself, each purchaser will also derive satisfaction from having contributed to the Club's campaign to provide funds for its religious education program.

We desire to thank those firms who have increased the interest and usefulness of our booklet with their advertising messages; and commend them to our fellow church members as worthy of our return patronage.

On behalf of our Free Church, we venture to dedicate this booklet to the many friendly neighbors throughout Andover and the vicinity who have been so helpful and kindly toward the church during the weeks following the fire. We suggest that this expression of neighborliness toward us has been indeed the outstanding matter of record pertaining to the fire.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

The Free Church fire of 1941 was not unrelieved misfortune. While it was costly, inconvenient and saddening, it brought us many benefits. We discovered, for example, how many friends we had in Andover. We discovered how important a place the church had in our hearts and how much we missed it when it was out of order. We saw how loyal all the members were, and how they rallied to their work in time of emergency. The fire occurred at a time when many churches were being burned and blasted by bombs in Great Britain, and brought home to us a taste of what people were suffering in the war zones.

The experience, as a whole, has reminded me of something Paul said about his imprisonment in Rome. "Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel." Paul had planned a great preaching tour in the Imperial City. Instead he had been sent there in chains. But he found that, just because he was a prisoner, he attracted greater attention and got the ears of more people than he had anticipated. Outward misfortune often gives us greater spiritual power. A disaster which imposed certain physical handicaps upon us seems to have strengthened our religion instead of weakening it.

An artist named Carlo Crivelli painted many of his pictures on a gold background. During a period when there was little appreciation for great art, people used to burn these Crivelli masterpieces to retrieve the precious metal that was in them. We were all sorry to see our church charred and broken by fire. But when it went down, we discovered something. We found gold in the ashes, and we became aware that the Free Church had been painted on a background of precious gold—the lustrous metal of divine truth and human aspiration.

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The following account of the fire is reprinted from the Andover Townsman by special permission of the editor, Elmer J. Grover.

Sunday night the parishioners of the Free Church gathered in their attractive house of worship to pay honor to Scotland's immortal bard, Robert Burns. Rev. Herman C. Johnson, pastor, gave an inspiring talk on "Robert Burns and Democracy," with many of the congregation offering a silent prayer of Thanksgiving that here in America Democracy gave them the right to worship as they please, that they could gather in a church without fear that soon a Dictator's bomb would wreak destruction on the building.

Monday morning many of the congregation came back to what was their attractive little church. They came through the front door to see a gaping hole in the arched roof at the back of the church, to see the pulpit section nothing but smouldering embers, to see walls blackened by smoke, floors soaked with sooty water. Fire, starting in a basement room, had done in America what bombs have done to churches all over England and the homeland of Bobby Burns.

Little girls dropped in on their way to school and continued to school unashamed of the tears that just wouldn't stop coming. Others who had grown up in the church, persons who had been baptized there, had gone to Sunday School, and had been married there, others who had said a last farewell to their loved ones before that pulpit—the church had been so much a part of their life that the sight of its ruins brought involuntary tears. Groups of ladies huddled near the door looked through misted eyes at a console from which smoke found its way skyward. An elderly man, with a cane providing more than usually needed support, slowly walked down the center aisle, stopping midway to survey the damage. A Scotch burr broken by a sob that wouldn't be stifled said: "O, the poor old church!"

How long the fire had been developing no one will ever know, but it must have been hours. For some time before it burst through the roof policemen and other town employees were searching everywhere to try to find the source of the smoke that was getting thicker and thicker. Helen Poland was on her way to work when the 5:30 darkness was suddenly lit up by the rush of flame through the roof, and she summoned the fire department. Off duty but already in his clothes ready to go over to the fire station to inquire about the smoke that was filling his Park street apartment was fireman Gordon Coutts. Lester Abbott working in the B. P. W. sand shed next to the fire station smelled the smoke but could not trace it. Officer Joseph Davis circled the streets around the square in a vain endeavor to locate the blaze which hidden at the rear of the church was steadily climbing toward the roof.

When the department arrived, Deputy Chief Hilton had his men attack the blaze in the small basement room adjoining the heating plant which sexton George Petrie had shut off the night before. When new Chief Edward Buchan arrived to receive his first real baptism of fire, he immediately called for aid from Lawrence which sent a pump and a crew of men who proved of great assistance. Chief Buchan had rushed from his Clark road home in a civilian overcoat and didn't take time to change. Soon his coat was covered with ice and fall-

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ing plaster, but in his first bad fire the new chief had covered himself with glory. He was everywhere.

When the blaze had subsided enough so that a fair appraisal of what had happened could be made, it was found that most of the downstairs damage occurred in a small room next to the boiler room. Here there had been a gas hot water heater, which officials said had not been used Sunday. Huge pipes from the boiler ran overhead; according to Mr. Petrie these pipes gave off intense heat, but the plant had been shut off. A safe here was rusted but still safe. Up through the partitions the fire had worked its way, destroying a room in which the Margaret Slattery class kept its records, costumes, etc. The most serious damage of all befell the organ, which was beyond repair. The parish house itself was spared damage, save for water and smoke, with the single exception being an oil painting of Mr. Torr which hung above a duct in the wall next the scene of the fire. All the canvas except the face itself was burned away. Thomas Gorrie, one of the church's most active workers, recovered some valuable vases; a cross that the Slattery class was about to give the church was badly burned.

Someone else was there, going in and out of the building to save what he could. There were no tears, no complaints, no bemoaning of the fate that had sent his church up in flames. Instead he kept on working, with a word of praise here and there for the firemen, an encouraging statement now and then that after all the damage really could have been worse. Rev. Mr. Johnson had a job ahead of him, and he faced it as a good clergyman should. Monday night he gathered the leaders of his church at his home. Soon it was agreed to accept the school department's kind offer for the use of the Memorial Auditorium for Sunday school and Sunday services. The Christian Endeavor societies will meet at private homes, and the Ladies' societies and the Boy Scouts will meet in one of the rooms in the Memorial Hall Library.

From the meeting went heartfelt thanks to the Baptist, South, West and Christ churches for their offers of accommodation. To the fire department and the police department the committee sent a word of gratitude, and then it echoed the firemen's thanks to Mrs. Granville Clark for the coffee that she supplied.

It will be rebuilt soon. Something that Dictators don't realize is that churches will always be rebuilt. Bombs may wreck them. Fires may destroy them, but a church is more than brick and plaster and steel; it's more than pulpits and organs and crosses. It's faith—and it can't be destroyed. It's something that brings tears to your eyes when you see the destruction; it's something that brings determination to your heart to rebuild anew after that destruction.

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MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF STANDING COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A special meeting of the Standing Committee and the Board of Trustees was held at the home of our pastor, Rev. Mr. Johnson, on Monday evening, January 27, 1941. The business of the evening was all matters relating to the emergency which had arisen due to the disastrous fire that had partly destroyed our house of worship.

The Pastor opened the meeting on schedule at 7:30 with quotations from the Holy Scriptures, one of which was, "Though ye pass through fire, ye will not be burned." He then offered a few words of prayer for renewed loyalty and courage. At this time he announced that he had invited Mrs. Angus to the meeting for a purpose which would be brought up later. He also acknowledged receipt of many offers of help and expressions of sympathy from Rev. Mr. Morris of Christ Church, Rev. Mr. Noss of the South Church, Rev. Mr. Savage of the West Parish Church, Rev. Mr. Smith and Mr. Clifford Dunnells of the Baptist Church. Each and every one very kindly offered the use of their respective churches and stated they felt arrangements could be made whereby we could hold services of worship if we so wished. He also stated he had received

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calls from the Rev. Dr. Brown of the South Congregational Church in Lawrence and the Rev. Lawrence Johnson of Salem, Mass., expressing regret and sympathy in the loss of our church building.

It was suggested we take up the matter first of a place of worship, inasmuch as we would be unable to use our own church for some time. Mrs. Angus stated here that Mr. William Doherty of the School Board had very kindly and thoughtfully suggested the use of the school auditorium for our Sunday worship, and had intimated that he would do all he could to attain that end. Deacon James Gillespie spoke words of praise for Mr. Doherty and the fine spirit shown by him in this crisis. Deacon Thomas Gorrie also stated he liked the idea of the auditorium for our services. It was moved that we accept Mr. Doherty's suggestion and ask him to make the necessary arrangements with the School Committee immediately, with the understanding that we would pay for the use of the building if necessary from 9 a. m. to 1:00 p. m. for church services. Motion carried. Miss M. B. Smith also suggested that she thought the library room upstairs could be secured for the use of our ladies' organizations and Boy Scout meetings. Mr. Ripley was consulted and authorized the use of this room for any of our church groups. A motion was passed that the Standing Committee recom-

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mend the use of this room to the Helping Hand Society, the Woman's Alliance, and the Boy Scouts, and that they arrange with Miss Putnam for the same.

It was moved and carried that letters of thanks be sent by our church clerk to the various ministers who had so kindly offered us the use of their church buildings. It was also moved and carried that letters be sent to Mrs. Granville Clark for her kindness in serving coffee to the firemen, to the fire department for their efficient work in controlling the fire, and to the police department for their courtesy and protection of our church property.

A motion was passed that a Pastoral letter be drawn up and sent out promptly by Mr. Johnson, stressing the need for unity and loyalty, and touching slightly on the financial end, such as unexpected expenditures, which would not be taken care of by the insurance. Mr. Buttrick arrived at this moment and presented a report informing us that everything was covered by insurance, church building, organ, and furniture, and that no anxiety need be felt as far as that was concerned. Mrs. Angus informed us at this point that Mr. Sherman had authorized the use of the school auditorium for our church worship and that no fee would be charged, except for janitor service. This message by phone.

Mr. Johnson expressed his thanks to the group for their courage and determination to carry on and prophesied a better church would arise under their leadership.

Mrs. Angus at this point spoke of the way our Pastor had strengthened us, and said our thanks should go to him for his untiring efforts to hold us together, and his prompt action in calling this meeting and giving us words of comfort. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully yours,

GEORGE KEITH, *Secretary*

Standing Committee

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Andover's Own Weekly Newsmagazine

The following letter was sent to all the resident members of the church shortly after the fire.

A NOTE FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

Dear Free Church Friend:

You are anxious, I know, to hear something on the fire, and what we are going to do about it.

The damage is such that we cannot hold services in the building for two or three months. Consequently, for the time being at least, we will hold morning worship and Sunday School in the Memorial Auditorium of the Punchard High School. Services will be at the customary hour; Sunday School at 9:30 and church at 10:45. Meetings which come through the week will be held in private homes or at a special room in the Town Library which has been offered to us. Most of our church activities can thus go on without interruption.

Financially, there is every cause for optimism. Your trustees, you may be sure, had everything protected with insurance as fully as possible. While the insurance will not cover all our expenses during the present emergency, people are showing a generosity and a willingness to work that is most heartening. Contracts will be let immediately for the complete repair and restoration of the church building.

Our chief emotion, it seems to me, should be one of gratitude. The destruction might have been far worse than it was. After all, it is only a physical misfortune that has befallen us, and not a spiritual one.

I hope you will all come to church regularly during these next weeks. That is the way you can best show your interest right now. Let us keep united; let us keep our bonds of friendship strong. Remember—by Easter, or shortly afterward, we will all be back home in a fresh, beautiful edifice, glorious in the sunshine of Spring.

Faithfully yours,

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FACTORS IN THE SELECTION OF A CHURCH ORGAN

By William Heartt Reese, Ph.D.

The problem of selecting a new organ is one beset with complications and difficulties which are perhaps at first thought not apparent. It is necessary to realize that however much the construction of a pipe organ may be subject to machinery and the methods of mass manufacture, the personal element thereby cannot be eliminated. There must always remain a human touch in the production which will be a guarantee of the artistic worth of the instrument. Unlike some utilitarian objects a good pipe organ cannot be bought according to a standard pattern or a catalogue number. Each good instrument is a personality, an independent conception and a creation for a specific situation. Let us consider some of the problems pertaining to the selection of such an art product.

An early organ composer and organist, Arnold Schlick, has given us in a treatise published in 1511 some points which shed light on the nature of this problem in his day. He advises for example that the organ be so installed that it can be heard to good advantage in all parts of the church, by choir and congregation alike, but that it not be placed next to a damp wall or under the gutters on the roof lest the water seep in and spoil it. It must be of seemly appearance and not be decorated with gaudy painting or sacrilegious figures. The keys and pedals should be of a certain size and the bench should be securely fastened to the floor. The metal of which the pipes are made should be the best: pipes containing a high percentage of tin are superior to lead pipes as rats and mice can do these last great harm by biting them and pushing them over.

Quaint as these observations of Schlick may seem to us they do nevertheless in certain respects have a direct bearing on our problem today. The thoughtful builder must first take into account the size and acoustic properties of the church. He must consider the amount of space available for the instrument and not attempt to crowd too many pipes into an inadequate space. He must use only the best materials in all phases of his workmanship so that the instrument will stand up well. The good builder will proceed in accordance with these principles; the unscrupulous builder may not and so should be avoided categorically.

The organ is one of the oldest musical instruments and has been used in church worship since early times. In European churches there are still existent prototypes of the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century organs. Over this span of years the organ has undergone a series of tonal and mechanical changes which however have not in every case been for the better. Our modern instrument should embody the best points of these changes.

The highest type of organ will always be a *sui generis* instrument and never a substitute for an orchestra as indeed was its conception during one era of organ building. Tonally the constitution of an organ has been bound inseparably with the musical composition of the day, and organ tonal conception and musical style have exerted a reciprocal influence on each other. The differences in tone in

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various organs is determined to a great extent by the number and types of pipes used. A judicious selection of pipes will aid in securing a balance of brilliance and sonority. The tone of the pipe however is determined not alone by its shape but may be varied to a considerable extent even after it has been built. This last process, known as voicing, is one of the most delicate in organ building, so much so that the tenal result as a whole depends for its success largely on the skill of the voicing. Here is a case where the personal factor plays its role, for pipes which are in themselves well made may be poorly voiced and so lose their good effect. The tone of an organ is also dependent on the position of its pipes. Whereas in past centuries all the pipes stood free and their volume could not be controlled, it was found possible to enclose a certain proportion of the pipes in a large wooden chamber having shutters on its front side which could be opened and closed. This arrangement allowed the volume of the pipes in this chamber to be increased or decreased at will. It is now customary to put all the pipes of one keyboard in such a chamber. This procedure enables one to produce dynamic shadings which otherwise would be impossible and also serves to distinguish the enclosed from the unenclosed pipes, affording still another type of tonal contrast. Finally it is of extreme importance that each set of pipes sound well by itself yet contribute with the other sets to make a satisfying ensemble. This is one of the severest tests of a good organ. Many a builder may be successful in producing individual stops of good timbre but may be woefully incompetent in obtaining a striking ensemble. This very combination of successful individual timbre and beautiful clear ensemble was a characteristic of many older organs.

Mechanically the organ has progressed rapidly during the last fifty years. Electricity has lightened the keyboard action, assured a steady flow of wind to the pipes and given the console a flexibility undreamt of in earlier days. A standard type of console has been prescribed by the American Guild of Organists; its use eliminates any idiosyncrasies of an individual builder.

From the foregoing observations the multiple factors to be considered in the selection of an organ will be apparent. Our previous organ, some thirty years old, was for its day a first class instrument and was in fine condition when destroyed. To supplant this with another first class instrument precludes all haste in consulting, selecting, building, installing and finishing. Let us therefore be thankful that this task is being undertaken with such thoroughness and let us look ahead with joyful anticipation to the dedication of our new instrument *ad maiorem gloriam Dei.*

In making up this booklet, half-tone cuts of all photographs used, as well as a line cut of the church drawing on the cover, were made up new and are now the property of the Durham Club. The Club would be pleased to grant to any interested individual or organization upon application, free use of these cuts in connection with any printing being done. The cuts will be available at the office of the printers of this booklet, Smith & Coutts Company, 4 Park Street, Andover.

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The following notice, written some years ago, about Mr. William S. Richardson, will be of interest to those who remember him as the architect of our present Free Church Building.

WILLIAM SYMMES RICHARDSON, who died in Rome on April 5, 1931, was born in Kingston, Mass., in 1873. He was the son of Edwin H. and Caroline Symmes Richardson, and was educated at the University of California, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

He entered the office of McKim, Meade & White in 1895, and worked closely with Charles F. McKim upon such important buildings as the National City Bank, the Pennsylvania Station, and the residence of John Innes Kane in New York, the Bank of Montreal, and the Girard Trust Company, Philadelphia.

He became a member of the firm in 1906, and designed the Racquet and Tennis Club, the Second National Bank, Fifth Avenue, and the Pennsylvania Hotel in New York; the Bank of Montreal in Winnipeg; the Station at Waterbury, Conn.; the Court of Honor at the San Francisco Exposition, and many private houses.

He served with the American Red Cross in Italy in 1918, and besides his profession he was enthusiastically interested in mountain climbing and fox hunting. In 1921 he was seriously injured by a fall from his horse, and retired from the active practice of architecture shortly afterwards to live in Rome. His charming personality won him a circle of devoted friends, who made a point of visiting him on their trips abroad; and his indomitable courage in his affliction was a source of wonder and inspiration to all who saw him.

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SERVICES OF REDEDICATION

On Sunday, April 20th, services of rededication were held in the auditorium. In the morning, our Pastor in his sermon showed how our church building aids worship in accordance with Puritan ideals—fostering purity of thought and feeling through simplicity of design. Following the sermon, the Litany of Dedication, as originally used in 1908, was conducted by the Rev. Markham W. Stackpole, who had taken part in the original dedication ceremonies.

In the evening, the pastors of neighboring churches assisted our Pastor in conducting the service. The processional and recessional, with both choirs and eight ministers participating, were most impressive. A number of gifts were presented to the church by various organizations and individuals, and were accepted by Miss Mary Byers Smith, chairman of the Board of Trustees, on behalf of the church. Miss Smith also expressed thanks on behalf of the church to all the individuals and societies, both within and without the church, who have helped in so many different ways since the fire.

The Rev. Frederick B. Noss, Pastor of the South Church, and the Rev. Newman Matthews, former Pastor of the West Church, delivered heartening messages of greeting and good wishes. The reminiscent address by the Rev. Frederic C. Wilson, now of Ipswich, recalled happy memories of past years—of events in the original church as well as in our present building. The Rev. Arthur S. Wheelock, our former Pastor, and now of White Plains, New York, delayed by unusual traffic conditions, was unable to arrive in time to give an address as planned, but did reach the church just after the ceremony, in time to exchange individual greetings with many of his old friends and former parishioners.

. . . From the Records of the Clerk.

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DANTOS BROTHERS

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